

E 281
S65

E 280

.H2 V6

Copy 1

AN APPEAL
TO THE
CONGRESS ^{OF} _{THE} UNITED STATES,
FROM THE
Society of Old Brooklynites,
FOR THE
ERECTION OF A MONUMENT OVER THE
REMAINS OF 11,500 PRISONERS
WHO DIED ON BOARD THE
BRITISH PRISON-SHIPS
DURING
THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

AN APPEAL

TO THE

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES

FROM THE

Society of Old Brooklynites,

FOR THE

ERECTION OF A MONUMENT OVER THE REMAINS
OF 11,500 PRISONERS

WHO DIED ON BOARD THE

BRITISH PRISON SHIPS

DURING

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

— — —

BROOKLYN :

PRESS OF GEO. TREMLETT, 306 FULTON STREET.

1890.

S. 10

Johns H. J. 10

11 20 10

SOCIETY OF OLD BROOKLYNITES.

Officers for 1890.

HON. JOHN W. HUNTER, *President.*

EDWARD D. WHITE, *First Vice-President.*

ALBERT H. OSBORN, *Second Vice-President.*

SAMUEL A. HAYNES, *Recording Secretary.*

JAMES L. WATSON, M.D., *Corresponding Secretary.*

DANIEL T. LEVERICH, *Financial Secretary.*

JUDAH B. VOORHEES, *Treasurer.*

Directors.

HON. JOHN W. HUNTER, *President, ex-officio.*

EDWARD D. WHITE,	ALBERT H. OSBORN.
WILLIAM H. HAZARD.	JOHN W. WIGGINS.
CHARLES C. LEIGH.	SETH R. ROBBINS,
JOEL SMITH,	NICHOLAS B. RHODES.
EDWIN H. BURNETT.	DANIEL T. LEVERICH.
WILLIAM E. SPRAGUE.	WILLIAM H. WARING.
SAMUEL A. HAYNES.	STEPHEN KIDDER.
JUDAH B. VOORHEES.	S. WARREN SNEDEN.
WILLIAM M. THOMAS.	JAMES L. WATSON, M.D.,
GEORGE W. STILLWELL.	JOSEPH W. CAMPBELL.

Standing Committees for 1890.

Executive Committee.

EDWARD D. WHITE.....88 Van Dyke Street.
ALBERT H. OSBORN,.....26 Court Street.
JUDAH B. VOORHEES.....Surrogate's Office, Court House.
CHARLES C. LEIGH,.....4 Willow Street.
S. WARREN SNEDEX,.....131 Prospect Place.

Finance Committee.

EDWIN H. BURNETT.....58 Poplar Street.
GEORGE W. STILLWELL,.....211 Thirteenth street.
STEPHEN KIDDER.....138 Atlantic Street.

Committee on Membership.

JOHN W. WIGGINS,.....377 Gold Street.
WILLIAM E. SPRAGUE.....156 Adelphi Street.
STEPHEN KIDDER.....138 Atlantic Street.

Committee on History, Arts and Sciences.

ALBERT H. OSBORN.....26 Court Street.
JAMES L. WATSON, M. D.,.....9 Elm Place.
STEPHEN KIDDER,.....138 Atlantic Street.
CHARLES C. LEIGH,.....4 Willow Street.
WILLIAM M. THOMAS.....219 Schermerhorn Street.

TO THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE
UNITED STATES NOW ASSEMBLED IN THE FIRST SESSION OF
THE FIFTY-FIRST CONGRESS.

Your petitioners, an incorporated society of the City of Brooklyn, under the title of the "SOCIETY OF OLD BROOKLYNITES," respectfully inform you that they presented the following petition to the Fiftieth Congress :

That the remains of more than 12,000 martyrs to the cause of liberty lie entombed in this city, who died during our Revolutionary war on board the prison ships of the British at the Wallabout, and which were buried on our shores during that memorable struggle, many of which were, by the action of the waves, washed out of their shallow graves—their bones scattered along the beach, exposed to the Summer's sun and Winter's storms, until the year 1808, when the Tammany Society or Columbian Order, of the City of New York, had them collected and buried with imposing ceremonies, in which the governors of several States, mayors of cities, and civil, military and ecclesiastical dignitaries from all parts of the country took part.

The place of burial was on Jackson street, in this city, and the tomb, a temporary wooden structure, in which they were placed, became so dilapidated by reason of changes made in the surroundings and from natural decay, that the sacred remains were again exposed to the gaze of the multitude, until the Park Commissioners of this city, with the sanction of the city government, prepared with great care and expense a permanent and imperishable tomb for their reception on the historic ground of Fort Greene, a charming elevation in Washington Park, in this city, overlooking the scene of their sufferings and death—to which the sacred remains were carefully removed and deposited.

Those devoted patriots, from every one of the original thirteen States, were prisoners of war, taken by the British army and navy, and numbered more than were killed in all the battles, both by sea and land, in that long and desperate struggle for freedom.

When it is remembered that constant and unremitting efforts were made by the British officers to induce these prisoners to purchase their freedom and save their lives by enlisting in the service of the enemy : that many, probably the majority of them, had families who were suffering by reason of their absence : that to

remain in these horrible prisons was almost certain death, and that under all these circumstances they remained faithful to the cause in which they had enlisted, and preferred death to dishonor: we must concede that they earned the title of "MARTYRS OF THE PRISON SHIPS," and deserve such recognition from the Government, (to aid in the establishment of which, they sacrificed their lives,) as will show to the world that republics are not ungrateful, but that we cherish their memories, honor their devotion to their country, and will erect such an enduring monument to commemorate their virtues as will stimulate future generations to emulate their patriotism.

We therefore most respectfully ask that your honorable body will make an appropriation of not less than one hundred thousand dollars toward the erection of a suitable monument, to be erected at or near the spot where their sacred remains now lie, the site for which will be donated for that purpose by the City of Brooklyn.

This Society will most cheerfully give all the aid in their power toward the accomplishment of the object of this Petition.

Very respectfully,

JOHN W. HUNTER,

President.

SAML. A. HAYNES,

Secretary.

BROOKLYN, January 5th, 1888.

Nearly thirty thousand citizens of New York, Brooklyn and New Jersey, signed the above petition.

Please note the following:

Your petitioners, citizens of the United States, do most respectfully and earnestly pray your honorable body to hear and grant the petition of the Society of Old Brooklynites, and to cause the erection of the long-delayed Monument to the Martyrs of the Prison Ships.

DESCENDANTS OF TIMOTHY DORGAN,

Patriot Martyr of the Prison Ship "Old Jersey."

REBECCA D. MANNIE,

GEORGE A. MANNIE,

ANDREW D. HOBDAV,

LOUISE MANNIE,

CHARLES HOBDAV,

JOSEPHINE HART,

Great Grandchildren,

ROSALINE BURT,

Great-Great Grandchildren.

CONCURRENT RESOLUTIONS RELATIVE TO ERECTING A MONUMENT
TO THE MARTYRS OF THE BRITISH SHIPS AT THE WALLABOUT
DURING THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

STATE OF NEW YORK, }
IN SENATE, ALBANY, Feb. 28, 1888. }

Whereas, the Society of Old Brooklynites of the City of Brooklyn has presented a petition to the Congress of the United States for the erection of a monument to commemorate the virtues and patriotism of more than twelve thousand soldiers and sailors, who perished on board the prison ships at the Wallabout during the Revolutionary war ; and

Whereas, these unhappy victims were citizens of the United States, prisoners of war, captured while in the service of this country during its long and desperate struggle for freedom, when the Government was too feeble to afford them protection or relieve their sufferings ; therefore,

Resolved, if the Assembly concur, that the Senators and Representatives in Congress from this State be, and they hereby are earnestly requested to use all honorable means in their power to secure the passage of the bill (H. R. 18,877), having for its object the erection of a monument to the memory of the martyrs of the prison ships.

Resolved, if the Assembly concur, that a duly certified copy of the foregoing preamble and resolution be forwarded to each Senator and Representative in Congress from this State.

By order,

JOHN S. KENYON,
Clerk.

IN ASSEMBLY, Feb. 28, 1888.

Concurred in without amendment.

By order of the Assembly,

C. H. CHICKERING,
Clerk.

The following was adopted unanimously by the Common Council of the City of New York :

Whereas, the Society of Old Brooklynites, of the City of Brooklyn, has presented a petition to the Congress of the United States for the erection of a monument on Fort Greene, in said city, to commemorate the virtues of those martyrs of the cause of liberty who died on board the prison ships at the Wallabout during the war of the Revolution ; and

Whereas, it is the opinion of this Common Council that it is the duty of Congress to fitly commemorate the manly virtues and stern patriotism of more than twelve thousand citizens of the United States who, when prisoners of war, refused to purchase their lives by enlisting in the service of the enemy, and preferred death to dishonor ; therefore,

Resolved, that this Common Council heartily endorse the patriotic efforts of the Society of Old Brooklynites, and earnestly request the members of Congress from this city to favor, by all honorable means in their power, the passage of the bill now pending for the erection of the proposed monument in honor of the martyrs of the prison ships.

Resolved, that a certified copy of the foregoing preamble and resolutions under the seal of the City be forwarded to every member of Congress from this city.

KINGS COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, }
BROOKLYN, Jan. 24, 1888. }

Adopted the following :

Whereas, the Society of Old Brooklynites of the City of Brooklyn have petitioned the Congress of the United States for an appropriation to fitly commemorate by a monument the martyrs of the prison ships of the Revolutionary war ; and

Whereas, this Board heartily approves of the motives and patriotic zeal of the said Society in the noble effort to inspire devotion to country, perpetuating the virtues of those who sacrificed their lives for republican principles, thus stimulating future generations to emulate their patriotism ; therefore be it

Resolved, that we most cordially extend to the Society of Old Brooklynites our earnest support and encouragement, and express the hope that their efforts will be rewarded by the people through their representative in Congress.

At a very large meeting of soldiers and citizens, held on Sunday, May 27, 1888, at the Tomb of the Martyrs, on Fort Greene, in honor of the heroes who perished on board the prison ships, after singing by the children of the public schools and religious services, and an eloquent address by one of the generals of the late war, the following were unanimously adopted :

Whereas, the Society of Old Brooklynites has petitioned Congress for an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars for the erection of a monument to the memory of those we are here assembled to honor ; therefore,

Resolved, that Congress is hereby earnestly requested to pass the bill presented by the Hon. Felix Campbell for that object, believing that no more worthy object can claim the attention of Congress, than thus to honor the memory of that gallant army which, when persistently importuned to choose between the prison ships and enlistment in the army of the king, exclaimed, “ *Give us the prison ships and death, or Washington and liberty!* ”

Resolved, that such a monument is necessary to preserve the spirit of patriotism that imbued the founders of this Republic from the accumulating influence of wealth and luxury, and to teach future generations that the Republic is not ungrateful, but that we honor their virtues and will commemorate their glorious deeds in imperishable granite.

Resolved, that this preamble and resolutions be signed by the officers of the meeting and transmitted to each member of Congress.

JOHN W. HUNTER,

Chairman.

THOMAS RULAN,

Commander.

WILLIAM A. POWERS,

G. A. R., Kings Co.

The Society has in its possession a slab of marble entrusted to it by our worthy fellow-citizen, Arthur W. Benson, Esq., which formed the corner-stone of the former tomb, on which is the following inscription :

“ In the name of the spirits of the departed free ! ”

“ Sacred to the memory of that portion of the American seamen, soldiers and citizens, who perished in the cause of liberty and their country, on board the prison ships of the British (during the Revolutionary war) at the Wallabout.

“ This is the corner-stone of the vault which contains their relics. Erected by the Tammany Society or Columbian Order of the City of New York. The ground for which was bestowed by John Jackson, of Nassau Island.

“ Season of blossoms : year of discovery the 316th : of the institution the 19th : and of American Independence the 32nd : April 6, 1808.

JACOB VANDERVOORT,
JOHN JACKSON,
BURDETT STRYKER,
ISSACHAR COZZENS,
ROBERT TOWNSEND,
BENJAMIN WATSON, and
SAMUEL COWDREY.

Wallabout Committee.

WILLIAM AND DAVID CAMPBELL,
Builders.”

The members of the Society hope to live to see this stone, in accordance with the wishes of Mr. Benson, the contributor, occupy a suitable place in such a monument as will be a credit to our Government and a proof that Republics are not always ungrateful, and that we appreciate the virtues of the sturdy patriots whose death it will commemorate.

The Society of Old Brooklynites presented to the Fifetieth Congress a pamphlet containing the names of eight thousand of the prisoners who were confined on board of the British prison ship *Jersey* during a part of the Revolutionary war.

After diligent research among the records of the British War Department, access to which was kindly permitted by Her Majesty's Government, this is all that can be found : and these are from the records of this one ship only. No record of the names of any of the prisoners of the prison ships *Scorpion*, *John*, *Stromboli*, *Falmouth*, *Hunter*, *Prince of Wales*, and *Transport* can be found : though their log-books make very frequent mention of prisoners having

been received on board. The list here presented is therefore but a small portion of those of our fellow citizens who were confined on board those floating Golgothas. Nor is it possible to designate which of the men here named died on board, but authentic history, within the memory of the parents of many now living, proves that the number that died and were buried on our shores, and over whose remains we now desire to erect a monument worthy of these patriots, numbered more than twelve thousand.

From these floating dungeons, the hearts of whose keepers must have delighted in the luxury of woe, the bodies of our countrymen after death were taken on shore, and one of our Revolutionary poets thus describes the manner in which their remains were disposed of :

“ Each day at least six carcasses we bore,
And scratched their graves along the sandy shore :
By feeble hands the shallow graves were made,
No stone memorial o’er the corpses laid ;
In barren sands and far from home they lie,
No friend to shed a tear when passing by :
O’er the mean tombs insulting Britons tread,
Spurn at the sand and curse the rebel dead.”

This Society, numbering between two and three hundred members, who must have resided in the city at least fifty years before being eligible to membership, have at great expense procured these names, and they have also caused plans and specifications of a proposed monument to the memory of these departed patriots to be prepared and forwarded to Congress, and procured the signatures of about thirty thousand citizens to the accompanying petition asking the Congress of the United States to erect the same over their remains.

The efforts of the Society in this direction have met the universal approbation of the people and of the press of the country. The Board of Supervisors of Kings County, the Board of Aldermen of the City of New York and the Legislature of the State of New York, have all passed resolutions, copies of which are printed herewith, commending the project and requesting Congress to grant the petition of the Society.

The bones of these martyrs lie interred in a permanent tomb in this city, but without a mark of any kind to inform the stranger as to the nature and object of the structure, and it is the earnest desire of this Society to remedy this defect, and to endeavor to do tardy justice to the memory of those to whose firmness and patriotism we owe our liberties and the blessings of the good government we enjoy.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE FIFTIETH CONGRESS.

50TH CONGRESS, 1
1st Session. }

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

} REPORT
No. 1335.

The Hon. Felix Campbell offered a bill asking for an appropriation of one hundred thousand dollars to erect a

MONUMENT TO THE MEMORY OF THE VICTIMS OF PRISON-SHIPS AT FORT GREENE, BROOKLYN.

MARCH 27, 1889.—Committee to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

MR. MAISH, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT :

[To accompany bill H. R. 1687.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 1687) for the erection and completion of a monument to the memory of the victims of the prison-ships at Fort Greene, Brooklyn, N. Y., do respectfully report :

After the battle of Brooklyn, Long Island, August 17, 1776, when the American Army under General Washington was defeated and compelled to retire to the northern part of Manhattan Island, the British prison-ships anchored in the Wallabout Bay were crowded with American naval prisoners who underwent experiences of a horrible nature, probably unequalled in the history of modern warfare.

Of these ships there were the *Whitby*, *Prince of Wales*, *Goodhope*, and the *Old Jersey*, or “Hell,” as it was called by those who were confined in her—often more than a thousand at a time—in consequence of the sufferings they endured.

They all lay in the channel between what is now the Cob Dock and the inner shore of the bay, the *Old Jersey* being at the west side, nearly opposite what is now the west entrance to the New York Navy Yard. The prisoners were crowded together in these dismantled ships or hulks, poorly fed and badly treated, and they died by thousands. It is estimated that between 11,000 and 12,000 prisoners perished on these vessels, it being claimed that the mortality on the *Old Jersey* alone amounted to five a day.

The prison-ships were originally the transport vessels in which cattle and other supplies for the British army had been brought to America in 1776, and which had been anchored in Gravesend Bay and occupied by the prisoners taken in the battle of Brooklyn. Upon the occupation of the city by the British these soldiers were transferred to the prisons on shore and the transports were devoted more especially to the marine prisoners, whose numbers were rapidly increasing, owing to the frequent capture of American privateers by the King's cruisers.

The first prison-ship anchored in the Wallabout was the transport *Whitby*. She was moored near Remsen's mill, which was on the west shore of the bay, near Martyn's Point, or Martyr's Hook, as it was subsequently called, about the 20th of October, 1776, and crowded with prisoners. Here the prisoners had bad provisions, worse water, and even these rations were small. No medical man attended the sick, disease had full sway, and pestilence reigned supreme. Hundreds died from pestilence or starvation, and the sand beach between the ravine in the hills—where Little street, Brooklyn, now is—and the shore became filled with graves in the course of two months.

In May, 1777, two large ships were anchored in the Wallabout, when the prisoners were transferred from the *Whitby* to them. These ships subsequently took fire, and some of the prisoners were burned in them before they could be removed to other vessels. In 1779 the *Prince of Wales* and the *Good Hope* were used as prison ships. The latter was burned in 1780, and then the *Stromboli*, *Scorpion* and *Hunter*, all nominally hospital ships, took their place in the Wallabout. There were nearly a dozen others, but of all the *Old Jersey* won pre-eminence in the sad history of the prison ships. She was originally a sixty-gun ship and had a long and honorable career, but, being unfit for further active service, in 1776, was converted into a prison ship. She was dismantled, her port holes were closed and securely fastened, and their places supplied by two tiers of small holes, each about 20 inches in diameter, with two iron bars crossed at right angles. Caged in the body of this hulk, with little light and almost no fresh air, packed together like animals, poorly fed on what was sometimes spoiled and wormy food, and given water that was stagnant, the prisoners died off like flies. It was no wonder that they gave their horrible hole of suffering, pestilence, and death the nickname of "Old Hell."

The horrors of these ships are a matter of history. The foul air,

confinement, darkness, hunger, thirst, the slow poison of the malarious locality, the torments of vermin, the suffocating heat in summer, the excessive cold in winter, the horrible brutality of the officers and the guards, who would frequently fire among or bayonet the prisoners for some trivial or pretended offense, the almost total absence of hope, are things too sickening to dwell upon.

At the expiration of the war the *Old Jersey* was abandoned where she lay. The dread of contagion prevented any one venturing on board, but it was not long until the worms, which had been at work upon her timbers, made way for the water to rush in, and she went down into the waters of the Wallabout, carrying with her the only record of the names of thousands of sufferers which had been inscribed upon her inner planks.

The dead from these ships had been taken on shore and buried in trenches dug in the sand, and for years after the war their bones were found all around the bend of the bay, but more especially on the west side. We are informed by parties connected with the navy yard that even now in making excavations they find the bones of human beings, supposed to have been victims of the prison ships.

For several years after the war was over the bones of those who suffered martyrdom in these ships for the cause of liberty were to be seen, scarce covered, on the banks of the Wallabout, or strewn upon its shores and bleaching in the winter's storm and summer's sun. Several patriotic individuals endeavored to have the attention of Congress directed to the subject, but no formal movement was made to give the bones proper interment until 1792, when the citizens of Brooklyn, at a regular town meeting, resolved that the bones which had been disinterred and collected by John Jackson should be removed and buried in the graveyard of the Reformed Church and a monument put over them.

John Jackson was a native of Queens County, L. I., who removed to Brooklyn soon after the Revolution. About 1791 he purchased what was known as the Remsen Estate, situated on the Wallabout, which comprised about 30 acres of land, 35 of pond, together with the old Remsen mill and dwelling. This farm was partly on what was known as Martyr's or Martyn's Hook, where Little street runs down to the water, and extended as far west as Gold street, and east into the Navy Yard.

It was in making improvements on the farm and in cutting away the high banks which then formed the shore of the bay that

Mr. Jackson found large quantities of the bones. In 1801 he sold 40 acres of this farm to the United States for a navy yard, it being the west portion of the yard, north of the present York street entrance. When the committee of the town meeting above mentioned applied, in 1793, for the privilege of removing the bones, Mr. Jackson refused, as he had other plans in view. He was an influential member and a sachem of the Tammany Society, or Columbian Order. He offered this Society an eligible piece of ground on his property in the Wallabout, at a point which is now at the east end of Front street, by the Navy Yard wall, for the purpose of erecting a suitable sepulchre, which the Society accepted.

In 1803 a memorial to Congress was prepared and sent to Washington, but nothing was done by this body. In the meantime Benjamin Ayerigg, shocked at the exposed condition of the remains, made a contract in 1805 with an Irishman living in the Wallabout, "to collect the bones as far as may be, without digging," and deliver them to him at a stipulated price, which was done, and the remains thus collected formed a portion of those afterward placed in the Tomb of the Martyrs. In 1808 the Tammany Society appointed a committee and proceeded to take steps toward the long-talked of sepulchre. They initiated an extensive correspondence, published stirring appeals, and invited patriotic citizens all over the country to make a national affair of it. The public took hold zealously, and showed so much interest that the corner-stone of the tomb was laid on the 13th of April, 1808. An imposing military and civic procession formed at Fulton Ferry, under Major Ayerigg, grand marshal, and marched through Main, Sands, Bridge and Jackson (now Hudson) streets, Brooklyn, to the vault on Jackson street, adjoining the Navy Yard. Benjamin Romaine, grand sachem of Tammany, assisted by the Wallabout Committee, laid the corner-stone of the vault, upon which was the inscription :

In the name of the spirits of the departed free, sacred to the memory of American seamen, soldiers and citizens who perished on board the prison-ships of the British at the Wallabout during the Revolution.

This is the corner-stone of the vault erected by the Tammany Society, or Columbian Order, which contains their remains, the ground of which was bestowed by John Jackson, Nassau Island. Season of blossoms. Year of the discovery the 316th, of the institution the 19th, and of American Independence the 32d.

April 6, 1808.

Ceremonies were completed by the interment of thirteen mam-

moth coffins, and orations by the most distinguished men of the day.

Subsequent to the interment the excitement was kept up for a while. Some money was collected, and then the Martyrs' Tomb dropped out of public notice. Stiles, in his "Wallabout Prison-Ship Series," speaking of the Tammany demonstration, gives this peroration :

The pious tribute of the living to the dead is always solemn and affecting: a society in mourning for a hero is interesting to every one who beholds it, but a nation of freemen bending in tears over the tomb of eleven thousand martyrs to the cause of liberty is a sight never before exhibited, and presents a theme for the historian and the poet. Happy, happy Columbia! May returning years still find thee as thou art this day—grateful to thy heroes, the nurse of liberty, at peace with the world.

After the great procession, the tomb, unfinished, was left to take care of itself.

When the grade of Jackson street was altered the walls of the vault were infringed upon, and finally the very lot with the tomb upon it, containing the moldering dust of these 11,500 heroes, was sold for taxes.

Benjamin Romaine, a true patriot, who had been a soldier in the war, came forward and bought the lot, rescuing the remains from desecration. He erected an ante-chamber over the vault and appropriately adorned it. This was in 1839. Mr. Romaine held the place sacred: and in order to protect it from desecration, he appropriated the tomb as a burial place for himself and family. At his death, in 1844, his body was placed in a coffin, which he had long kept for himself in the vault. Two years before his death, a committee of citizens petitioned the Legislature for leave to remove the bones for the purpose of appropriate sepulture, but Mr. Romaine protested. He said:

I have guarded these sacred remains with a reverence, which perhaps at this day all may not appreciate or feel, for more than thirty years. They are now in their right place, near the Wallabout and adjoining the Navy Yard. They are my property. I have expended more than \$900 in and about their protection and preservation. I commend them to the protection of the general Government. I bequeath them to my country. This concern is very sacred to me. It lies near my heart. I suffered with those whose bones I venerate. I fought beside them: I bled with them.

In consequence of this remonstrance nothing was done.

Ten years later a large meeting of citizens of Brooklyn resolved :

That the time has arrived when the citizens of New York and Brooklyn can not, without criminality, longer delay the necessary efforts for rearing the monument to the Martyrs of the Prison Ships—

and an organization was formed, entitled the "Martyrs' Monumental Association," in which each Senatorial district in the State of New York ; and each State and Territory in the Union was represented. They set to work, selected a site on Fort Greene, secured plans for the monument, agitated the subject, and solicited donations. But once more enthusiasm died out, and two more decades had almost passed before anything again was done.

The Common Council of the city of Brooklyn having granted the association an appropriate lot on Fort Greene, called Washington Park, the site was utilized in 1873. In that year a brick vault, 25 by 11 feet, was completed in the side of the hill facing toward the junction of Myrtle avenue and Canton street, it being the nearest point toward the Wallabout. By this time, the vault on Hudson avenue (formerly Jackson street) had become so dilapidated from neglect, that the remains were in an exposed state, many of the old coffins being broken or defaced. Twenty-two new boxes were procured, the old coffins placed in them; and on the 17th day of June, 1873, all that remained of the mortal part of the 11,000 martyrs of the prison ships was quietly removed to the vault at Washington Park. There was no ostentation this time : it was simply a labor of love.

After nearly a century of neglect, relieved occasionally by spasmodic bursts of patriotism, the bones were at last placed in a spot where it is believed they will rest undisturbed until time shall be no more. So quietly was the removal performed, and so little interest does it seem to have elicited, that the daily papers of the day did not make any mention of it. The vault was covered with asphalt and the surface restored, and there are few people in the city to-day who know where these bones lie buried. The base work of the intended ornamental stone superstructure has been constructed, upon which it is intended to erect the monument proposed by the accompanying bill.

This chosen site of Fort Greene is a lofty eminence looking down upon the Wallabout, where the prison ships were anchored. It also commands a view of the whole city of Brooklyn and the surrounding country upon which, in 1776, the Battle of Long Island

was fought. During the battle a battery was located here, known as Fort Putnam, in honor of General Putnam, who was the immediate commander of the American Army during the illness of General Greene. From this eminence General George Washington, Commander-in-Chief, became the agonizing witness of the rout and slaughter of Sullivan's command, and during the whole engagement directed the movements of the American Army. It was here that he signed the order to retreat, when he saw that resistance in the face of overwhelming forces was useless. On this spot he encouraged the suffering soldiers with words of hope during the last day of the battle, until the night brought the fog that made retreat possible.

Immediately after this memorable retreat, the British, having gained absolute possession, used Wallabout Bay for the incarceration of the prisoners of war.

News of the barbarous and inhuman treatment of these prisoners reached Congress in 1781, when a special committee was appointed, consisting of Mr Boudinot, M. Sharpe, and Mr. Clymer, who submitted the following resolutions :

Resolved, That it appears to Congress that a very large number of marine prisoners and citizens of the United States, taken by the enemy, are now closely confined on board prison-ships in the harbor of New York.

That the said prison-ships are so unequal in size to the number of prisoners, as not to admit of a possibility of preserving life in this warm season of the year, they being crowded together in such a manner as to be in danger of suffocation, as well as exposed to every kind of putrid and pestilential disorder.

That no circumstances of the enemy's particular situation can justify this outrage on humanity, it being contrary to the usage and custom of civilized nations thus deliberately to murder their captives in cold blood ; as the enemy will not assert that prison-ships equal to the number of prisoners can not be obtained, so as to afford room sufficient for the necessary purposes of life.

That the enemy do daily improve the distresses to enlist and compel many of our citizens to enter on board their ships of war, and thus to fight against their fellow-citizens and dearest connections.

That the said marine prisoners, until they can be exchanged, should be supplied with such necessaries of clothing and provisions as can be obtained to mitigate their present sufferings.

That therefore the Commander-in-chief be, and is hereby instructed to remonstrate to the proper officer within the enemy's lines on the said unjustifiable treatment of our marine prisoners, and demand in the most express terms, to know the reasons of this unnecessary severity towards them ; and that the Commander-in-Chief transmit such answer as may be

received thereon to Congress, that decided measures for due retaliation may be adopted, if a redress of these evils is not immediately given.

That the Commander-in-Chief be, and is hereby, instructed to direct the supplying of the said prisoners with such provisions and light clothing for their present more comfortable subsistence as may be in his power to obtain, and in such manner as he may deem most advantageous for these United States.

There is no question that these men were martyrs to the cause of liberty; that those who survived the war and were honored by the grateful care of their Government and esteemed until the close of their lives for their patriotism and valor, were entitled to much less than these unfortunate victims of cruelty and hardship; and that the least that the Government can do at this time is to erect to them a monument upon which shall be inscribed a record of their service and the story of their martyrdom.

The propriety of the erection of such a monument by the nation will not be questioned in view of these facts.

These helpless victims were prisoners of war, belonging not to any city or State, but to the whole country; captured by the enemy while in the service of their country in both the Army and Navy; citizens of all the original thirteen States, and numbered more than were slain in all the battles, both by land and sea, of that long and desperate struggle for freedom.

Had these victims been less arduous in their patriotism or less firm in their devotion to liberty; had they purchased their lives by enlisting in the service of the enemy, as they were daily importuned to do, and this army of 12,000 valiant men been added to the forces against which Washington and his compatriots were fighting, the struggle of our forefathers would have no doubt been greatly prolonged.

Your committee therefore recommend that the bill do pass with the following amendment:

Provided, That the money appropriated as aforesaid shall be expended under the direction of the Secretary of War, and the plans, specifications, and design shall first be approved by him.

ACTION TAKEN BY THE TWENTY- EIGHTH CONGRESS.

The Twenty-Eighth Congress, at its second session, referred a resolution to the Military Committee to enquire into the propriety of erecting a proper sepulcher for the bodies now laying at the Wallabout, of the patriots of the Revolution who died from British cruelty on board the *Jersey* prison ship, and of an appropriate monument over them,—

Report that they have carefully investigated the subject committed to them by the resolution in connection with the aid afforded by the history of the eventful period of the War of Independence. It is equally incredible that such barbarities should have been perpetrated, as indubitable testimony establishes, to have been committed upon the Americans, who fell into the power of British cruisers, and that Congress should have delayed so long to perform its duty to the country, to give a proper resting place to the remains of the Martyrs who thus cruelly perished, rather than enlist in the British service and take up arms against their country.

In order, however, that the subject may be fully understood, they deem it proper to present a brief statement of facts with the authorities for them furnished by the mover of the resolutions, Hon. Henry C. Murphy.

It appears from a correspondence between General Washington and the officer commanding the British ships of war at New York, opened by the former, in pursuance of the resolutions of Congress, that the British government made no provision for the confinement on shore of Marine prisoners, but kept them in ships alone, notwithstanding the great number of those captured and the inadequacy of the few ships which were used for the purpose, to accommodate them (Spark's Washington, vol. 8, folio 146 and 523). From the treatment which the prisoners received in other respects, and the thousand deaths which occurred from the crowded state of the ships, the horrible truth is forced upon our minds, that this system of imprisonment was designed and intended to kill them off, while it was pretended to observe the rules of war towards them. The ships used for this purpose were the hulks of condemned vessels, useless for any other object, and under the best arrangements miserably calculated for that. The principal of these were called the *Jersey*, *Whitby*, *John Scorpion*, *Transport* and

Strambolo ; others styled hospital ships were used ostensibly for the sick, but really for the dying.

The *Whitby* was employed in the beginning of the war, but in 1780 the *Jersey*, which was larger, having carried 64 guns, was moored in Wallabout—a great nook in the river, where the Navy Yard is now located, as a ship to receive the prisoners, and was continued there in that service until the end of the war. In 1808, the remains of this human slaughter house was still to be seen at low tide in the same place. In order to prepare her as a prison, she was relieved of her armament, her port holes closed, and her rigging and spars stripped off, all except her bowsprit; at the stern was erected a flag staff, small holes about 20 inches square were cut in the sides, at distances of ten feet, and across them at right angles were two bars of iron ; on the upper deck hog pens were erected for the hogs of the officers, below them were neither berths to lie in nor seats to sit on. (Thompson's History of Long Island, p. 233).

In this unsightly and floating dungeon the prisoners were received, no distinction between officers and sailors. In the Autumn of 1780, the number in her was eleven hundred, and as fast as they escaped or were exchanged, their places were supplied ; and at no time does the number appear to have been much less. They were kept below deck from sun set to sun rise, and all intercourse with the upper deck was prohibited, except they were allowed to go on deck one at a time to obtain water. The guards were expressly forbidden during these hours to relieve any prisoner however distressed he might be, and as some were made maniacs by raging thirst, attempted to get on deck for water, they were driven back by the bayonet. One night when the prisoners were assembled by the hatch-way for the purpose of obtaining fresh air, the sentinels thrust their bayonets among them, and in the morning twenty-five were found wounded, stuck in the head and dead of the wounds they had thus received. (Affidavit of William Burke, in his Historical Account of the American Martyrs at the Wallabout, p. 90).

The sick were not taken to the hospital ships till they were so weak that they frequently expired before they got out of the ship, nor were they allowed to be mustered. (Affidavit of George Batterman, made at Boston, December 19, 1780, politely furnished by Peter Force, Esq).

The provisions furnished them were both insufficient to sustain life, and deleterious to it. They were allowed eight ounces of

condemned bread, and a pint of stinking water a day, and eight ounces of meat a week. (Same affidavit.) The meat was putrid, the bread worm-eaten, and the water such as remained in vessels in returning voyages. The whole system of treatment was such as to make them sick, and when sick to accelerate their death. One of the survivors (Alexander Collin, Jr.) states, that so offensive was the food given them, that whenever they could get an opportunity they would scoop the bran from the troughs of the hog pens, and eat it with as good an appetite as the hogs themselves (Historical Account, p. 31).

For more than a month he also states that they were obliged to eat their food, such as it was, without cooking. Another witness who was confined in the *Jersey*, and after the war, was a retail trader in Philadelphia, declares that the hardest battles he ever fought in his life were with a fellow prisoner, and that the object of contention was the putrified carcass of a stewed rat. (Niles Reporter, vol. 2, p. 250).

Captain Thomas Dring states that the first night he was on board, he was tormented with what he supposed to be vermin; and in coming on deck, he found that the black handkerchief which he wore around his neck was completely spotted with them ((Thompson's History of Long Island, p. 240).

The Rev. Thomas Andrews, a Presbyterian clergyman, who shipped as a privateersman from New London, and was taken and confined in the *Jersey*, informs us that he sometimes found the man a corpse in the morning, by whose side he had laid himself down at night; once or twice, he said, by order of a stranger on the quarter deck, a bag of apples was hurled promiscuously into the midst of hundreds of prisoners crowded together as thick as they could stand, and life and limb were endangered in the scramble. This instead of compassion was cruel sport; when I saw it commenced I fled to the most distant part of the ship.

The result of such treatment is manifest: disease soon broke out and raged in the most horrid forms; dysentery, small pox and yellow fever all held victims (Thompson's History of Long Island, p. 238).

When Capt. Talbot was on board, which was in October, when frosty nights had reduced the number of deaths, the average on board the *Jersey* was ten a day, which it will be recollected was only a receiving ship. What it was on board the Hospital ships, the imagination alone can conceive. Such was the mortality, that

out of thirteen prisoners taken from one vessel, all were seized with the fever and all but four died.

Men were sewed up alive in their blankets in the haste to bury them, if buried it could be called. A Rhode Islander by the name of Garot, thus sewed, miraculously escaped through the humanity of the sailor who observed signs of life and ripped open the blanket. He lived for some years afterwards. (Historical Account, p. 34).

The motives for such cruelty were two-fold, and they reflect eternal disgrace upon the English Government. It hoped in the first place to induce the prisoners to enlist in the Royal service as their only refuge from death, but to the honor be it said they spurned the request as often as it was made. Alexander Coffin says he knew of but one prisoner entering on board a British prison ship that contested to enlist, though they knew they should die where they were. The prison ships were held up in terrorism in other parts of the country. In one instance in South Carolina we are told after every artifice that cunning could devise had been used to induce the American prisoners to enlist. After the British officer called, Frazier had in vain attempted to seduce them by hope and terrify them with threats. He presented to them this ever to be remembered, denunciation. Go, he then said, to your dungeons in the prison ships, where you shall perish and rot, but first let me tell you that the rations which have been hitherto allowed for your wives and children, shall from this moment cease forever, and you shall die assured that they are starving in the public streets, and that you are the authors of their fall. Solemn silence followed the declaration: they cast their wandering eyes upon one another and valor for a moment hung suspended between love of family and love of country. Love of country at length rose superior to any other consideration and moved by one impulse this glorious band of patriots thundered in the astonished ears of their persecutors the prison ship and death, or Washington and our country. (Faig's Address in Historical Account, p. 55).

The other inducement to this treatment was the profit of the Commissioners of Prisoners. It was disgraceful that the British Government should appoint such men. The principal of these was one David Sprout: his name should be handed down to everlasting infamy, and well described by Frencan, who says:

" Hell has no mischief like a thirsty throat
Nor one tormentor like your David Sprout."

But disease, famine and the bayonet were not the only causes of death.

George Blatterman, who was captured on a voyage from Turks Island to Rhode Island and taken to the *Jersey*, said the commanding officer on board the *Jersey* told us if the ship took fire we should all be turned below and perish in the flames.

By accident the ship took fire in the Steward's room. The commanding officer ordered the Hessian guard to turn us below, and if we offered to resist, that they should fire among us, and if any of us should get into the water they should fire on us and kill us if possible.

One of the ships, the *Transport*, containing about three hundred prisoners, was entirely consumed, and as she burnt, the men were seen dropping into the river from the port-holes (Historical Account, p. 80). This brief summary of facts established by credible testimony, and showing that it was the determination of the British Commander to kill by cruelty these gallant men whom they could not subdue in any other way, might be enlarged, but it is not necessary. It sufficiently shows that we need not refer to other times or other countries for examples of man's inhumanity to man. Here in our own land and in our own struggle for freedom, have transpired scenes more horrible than that of Calcutta, and a punishment has been inflicted as inhuman as that which bound the dead corpse to the living man.

The precise number of the victims of all the prison ships is not known. In a newspaper published in New London on the 25th of April, 1783, the number who perished by this barbarous usage on board the *Jersey* alone, is stated to have been 11,644; the whole number was probably much greater.

The bodies of the dead were carried to Long Island shore and there covered with a few shovelfuls of sand—not buried. The elements soon disclosed many of them to public view, but when the improvements in and about the Navy Yard were undertaken in 1802, the truth of the statement as to the number of those who had perished was made evident to thousands still living. It was found to be really Golgotha, a place of skulls. Nearly twenty hogsheads of their bones were then collected. They have been preserved mainly through the pious care of one of their compatriots, Benjamin Romaine. They were placed in a temporary vault in 1808, on a piece of ground given for that purpose by the late Samuel Jackson, a citizen of Brooklyn.

In process of time that ground fell in the hands of Mr. Romaine. The citizens of Brooklyn, through a highly respectable committee,

petitioned the Legislature in 1843 for leave to remove the bones for the purpose of an appropriate sepulture.

Against this Mr. Romaine remonstrated. He said, I have guarded their sacred remains with a reverence which perhaps at this day all may not appreciate or feel, for more than thirty years. They are now in the right place, near the Wallabout and adjoining the Navy Yard. They are my property, I have expended more than nine hundred dollars in and about their protection and preservation. I commend them to the care of the General Government ; I bequeath them to my country. This concern is very sacred to me, it lies near my heart, I suffered with these bones I venerate, I fought beside them ; I bled with them.

In consequence of this remonstrance, nothing more was done. Mr. Romaine, then 80 years old, has since joined that host of martyrs—his bequest to us, to Congress, to the country, is now to be taken care of.

It is a national duty which we owe to these patriots to give them proper sepulture. When living they were the object of the care of Congress, they should be no less so now they are dead. Sound policy in regard to the future, directs that we should perform our duty to those who suffered in the past. Let it be known that courage and patriotism in the service of the country are virtues duly esteemed, and though we may not be able to compensate the loss to their families, we can give some testimonial of our patriotism.

The following are the proceedings of the Continental Congress alluded to in relation to the prisoners on board the prison ships, in August 3d, 1781 :

The Committee, consisting of Mr. Boudino M. Sharpe and Mr. Clymer, were appointed to take into consideration the state of the American prisoners in the power of the enemy,—

Report that they have collected together, and curiously looked into, various evidences of the treatment of our unhappy fellow prisoners with the enemy ; have heretofore and still do find the subject so important and serious a nature as to demand much greater attention and fuller consideration than the present disteemed situation of these confined on board the prison ships at New York will now admit of ; wherefore they beg leave to make a partial report, and desire to sit again.

They accordingly submitted a report, whereupon it was resolved,

That it appears to Congress that a very large number of marine prisoners and citizens of the United States, taken by the enemy, are now closely confined on board prison ships in the harbor of New York.

That the said prison ships are so unequal in size to the number of prisoners, as not to admit of a possibility of preserving life this warm season of the year, they being crowded together in such a manner as to be in danger of suffocation as well as exposed to every kind of putrid and pestilential disorder.

That no circumstance of the enemy's particular situation can justify this outrage on humanity, it being contrary to the usage and custom of civilized nations thus deliberately to murder their captives in cold blood, as the enemy will not assert their prison ships equal to the number of prisoners, cannot be obtained so as to afford room sufficient for the necessary purposes of life. That the enemy do daily impress these distresses to enlist and compel many of our citizens to enter on board their ships of war, and thus to fight against their fellow-citizens and dearest connections.

That the said marine prisoners, until they can be exchanged, should be supplied with such necessities of clothing and provisions as can be obtained to mitigate their present sufferings.

That, therefore, the Commander-in-Chief be, and is hereby instructed to remonstrate to the proper official within the enemy's lines on the said unjustifiable treatment of our marine prisoners, and demand in the most express terms to know the reason of this unnecessary severity towards them, and that the Commander-in-Chief transmit such answer as may be received to Congress. That decided measures for due retaliation may be adopted if a redress of the evils is not immediately given.

That the Commander-in-Chief be and is hereby also instructed to direct the supplying the said prisoners with such provisions and light clothing for their present more comfortable subsistence, as may be in his power to obtain, and in such manner as he may judge most advantageous for the United States.

Ordered, that the Committee have leave to sit again.

In pursuance of these resolutions, General Washington, on the 21st of August, 1781, addressed the letter to the officer in command of the British ships at New York, as mentioned in the first part of this report.

After stating the particulars of the complaint to be the inadequacy of the room in the prison ships to the number of prisoners confined on board of them, which causes the death of many, and is the occasion of most intolerable inconvenience and distresses to those who survive, he adds a bare denial of what has been asserted by so many individuals who have unfortunately experienced the nuisance I have mentioned, will not be satisfactory. He therefore requires permission for a proper officer to make a survey of the situation of the prisoners.

Captain Afflick in reply says that the British Government had made no provision for naval prisoners than the ships, and that he would allow any officer who might be agreed upon to go with one of his officers to witness in which way they treated prisoners.

Nothing further appears to have been done, as it was evident that such a survey would not be allowed, and that the war was to be conducted on the part of the English Government without regard to the cause of humanity.

The interpretation of Congress however at that time, and its failure to relieve the prisoners, call upon us now to do what alone can be done in justice to the dead.

Such were the views and action of the Continental Congress and General George Washington at the time of the horrible sufferings of these patriotic martyrs which were fully brought to light by the Twenty-Eighth Congress from the testimony of many witnesses as well as Congressional and other documentary evidences.

It was brought before the last Congress in the report from the Military Committee, and now it is brought before this Congress in the following bill, which we pray will be passed, and the long delayed act of justice will be accomplished.

JOHN W. HUNTER,
President

SAMUEL A. HAYNES,
Secretary.

Executive Committee.

EDWARD D. WHITE, *Chairman.*
ALBERT H. OSBORN,
JUDAH B. VOORHEES,

S. WARREN SNEDEN,
CHARLES C. LEIGH, *Secretary.*
4 Willow Street,
Brooklyn, N. Y.

H. R. 3887.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

JANUARY 6, 1890.

Read twice, referred to the Committee on Military Affairs, and ordered to be printed.

MR. CAMPBELL introduced the following bill :

A BILL

For the erection and completion of a Monument to the memory of the victims of prison-ships at Fort Greene, Brooklyn.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that the sum of one hundred thousand dollars be, and the same is hereby, appropriated, or so much thereof as may be necessary, out of any money in the Treasury of the United States, not otherwise appropriated, for the erection and completion of a monument to the memory of the victims of the British prison-ships at New York during the war of the American Revolution to be placed at Fort Greene, Brooklyn, State of New York : *Provided*, that the money appropriated as aforesaid shall be expended under the direction of the Secretary of War, and the plans, specifications and design for such monument shall, before any of the money so appropriated is expended, be first approved by the Secretary of War.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

0 011 802 000 5



0 011 802 000 5